

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 OMB-01 PC-01 HA-05 TRSE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4869
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 3101

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, PINS, DR
SUBJECT: CONCERN OVER ELECTORAL BOARD ACTION

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 3052

1. THE DECISION OF THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE)
TO ACCEPT A REFORMIST PARTY LEGAL CHALLENGE AGAINST ITS
CHAIRMAN MANUEL JOAQUIN CASTILLO (REFTEL) HAS STIRRED
CONCERN IN THE PRD, THE PRESS AND OTHER CIRCLES. HOWEVER,
MOOD HAS SOMEWHAT EASED FROM INITIAL ALARM OF YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON, WHEN PRD RADIO PROGRAM RATHER DRAMATICALLY
ANNOUNCED THE JCE ACTION AND THE CALLING OF AN URGENT
MEETING OF PARTY HIERARCHY. JCE DECISION, PRINTED IN
FULL IN TODAY'S PRESS MAKES CLEAR THAT CASTILLO'S
REMOVAL IS ONLY TEMPORARY DURING PERIOD IN WHICH JCE WILL
CONSIDER REFORMIST PARTY CHALLENGES TO ELECTION RESULTS.

2. SUSPICION STILL RUNS DEEP THAT JCE ACTION MAY BE
LINKED TO OTHER RECENT EVENTS, NAMELY THE DETENTION
BY THE SECRET POLICE OFFICIAL WHO HEADS THE JCE COMPUTER
CENTER AND THE ORDERING OUT OF THE COUNTRY OF FELIPE
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ALVAREZ, REPORTEDLY AN IMPORTANT LEADER OF THE PARTIDO
ACCION DEMOCRATICA OF VENEZUELA, WHOSE NAME HAS FIGURED
IN REFORMIST PARTY CHARGES OF PRO-PRD ELECTORAL FRAUD.

3. PRD STATEMENT ISSUED TODAY AS RESULT OF EVENING
MEETING OF PARTY HIERARCHY SETS TONE OF MODERATE CONCERN.
DOCUMENT THOUGH WARNING THAT JCE ACTION ENCOURAGES ACTIONS

AIMED AT "DENYING THE POPULAR WILL," ALSO EXPRESSES HOPE THAT THE JCE "WILL ACT WITH FIRMNESS AND WITH A SENSE OF ITS HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY". IT CALLS ON PRESIDENT BALAGUER TO MAINTAIN THE POSITION STATED IN HIS MAY 19 TV SPEECH TO THE NATION THAT HE WILL RESPECT THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION.

4. EDITORIAL OPINION ALSO HAS EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN RE: JCE ACTION AGAINST CASTILLO. RESPONSIBLE LISTIN DIARIO SAID MOVE CREATED NEW UNEASINESS AND EXPRESSED VIEW THAT WHAT IS AT STAKE IN CURRENT SITUATION IS NOT JUST RESULTS OF ONE ELECTION BUT MAINTENANCE OF JURIDICAL ORDER. MORNING TABLOID, EL SOL, WARNED AGAINST A REFORMISTA TACTIC WHICH COMBINED THE USE OF BOTH LEGAL MEASURES AND POLICE PRESSURE TO UNDO THE ELECTION RESULTS, BUT ENDED UP ON NOTES OF HOPE THAT PRESIDENT BALAGUER WOULD LIVE UP TO HIS PROMISE TO RESPECT ELECTION RESULTS AND FAITH IN THE POWER OF THE DEMOCRATIC BELIEFS OF MOST DOMINICANS.

5. STRAIN OF OPINION WHICH HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD IS A CALL FOR SOME CLARIFICATION OF SITUATION BY BALAGUER HIMSELF. UNANSWERED QUESTION IN MANY MINDS IS HOW REFORMISTA CHARGES OF FRAUD AND ELECTORAL CHALLENGES CAN MAINTAIN MOMENTUM AFTER BALAGUER HAS GIVEN SIGNS OF ACCEPTING THE PRD VICTORY.

6. COMMENT: JCE DECISION IS NOT BEING TAKEN IN ITSELF
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AS CLEAR SIGN THAT PRD ELECTORAL TRIUMPH IS ON VERGE OF BEING REVERSED THROUGH LEGAL ACTION, THOUGH IT IS CAUSING SOME CONCERN. JCE'S FUTURE ACTIONS, PARTICULARLY ITS RULINGS ON REFORMISTA FRAUD CHARGES, WILL BE CAREFULLY WATCHED.

7. AS TO APPARENT CONTRADICTION BETWEEN POSITION OF BALAGUER AND THAT OF HIS PARTY, ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION WHICH EMBASSY IS HEARING MORE FREQUENTLY IS THAT REFORMISTA CHALLENGES ARE NOT DIRECTED AT DENYING POWER TO THE PRD AT THE PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL. ACCORDING TO THE EXPLANATION, THEY ARE RATHER AIMED AT REVERSING ELECTORAL RESULTS OF SOME CONGRESSIONAL AND MUNICIPAL OFFICES, THUS GIVING THE REFORMISTAS A GREATER BASE AS AN OPPOSITION PARTY. THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH REMARKS OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER TO MIAMI MAYOR FERRE IN THEIR CONVERSATION OF MAY 24 (S.D. 2844).
YOST

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